

**Testimony in Support of S.B. 3, An Act Requiring The Board Of Regents For Higher Education To
Develop Seminar Programs For Small Businesses**

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement:

My name is Dylan Council and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 3 - An Act Requiring The Board Of Regents For Higher Education To Develop Seminar Programs For Small Businesses**. This bill would give small businesses free seminars on electronic commerce, social media, and virtual currency allowing them to stay resilient during future COVID-19 surges and be competitive in an increasingly digitized marketplace.

Small businesses are the backbone of the Connecticut economy, accounting for 99.4% of all Connecticut businesses and employing 48.4% of all Connecticut employees, according to the Small Business Administration's 2021 Small Business Profiles for States. Connecticut's economic success is dependent on small businesses' success, and it is more important than ever for them to have an online presence. Since 2014, worldwide e-commerce sales have skyrocketed from \$1.336 trillion to \$4.938 trillion in 2021. Moreover, social media has become a vital marketing tool for small businesses to thrive in the modern economy and compete in e-commerce. As it becomes clear that COVID-19 has become an endemic virus, small businesses need the resources to establish an online presence to mitigate the fallout from future outbreaks when people are less willing to go to stores in-person.

The way people purchase products is changing rapidly. E-commerce sales were up a record-breaking 31.8% during 2020 according to the Department of Commerce. This is not just a COVID phenomenon, either. The Department of Commerce also reported that e-commerce sales rose 14.2% in the United States during 2021, even as people began to return to in-person shopping and vaccination rates rose. Unfortunately, this online shift has left many small businesses behind. According to a Connecticut Small Business Development Center survey of Connecticut small businesses, 75% of respondents experienced at least a 25% decline in revenue from 2019 to 2020. The survey also found that about half of the small businesses surveyed were not confident their business would return to profitability in a year. With small businesses being part of the backbone of our economy, it is necessary for us to support them.

I urge you to provide Connecticut small businesses with the support that they need and deserve. To compete in the modern economy and endure future COVID-19 outbreaks, small businesses need the resources and knowledge to create an online presence. S.B. 3 provides those vital resources to small businesses whose tight budget would make it difficult to otherwise pay for a private course on these topics. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement to give a much-needed boost to Connecticut's economy and its small businesses.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dylan Council
New Haven, CT